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Trends in Gender, Feminism and Energy Transition in the Global South

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This paper examines gender, feminism and energy transition in the Global South. It aims at unravelling how discrimination against and marginalisation of the female gender has been impeding energy transition in the Global South notwithstanding the international, regional and municipal initiatives in recent decades to combat, minimise or eradicate environmental hazards and inequality. The methodology adopted is a doctrinal analysis of both primary and secondary sources of law. Environmental justice provides the theoretical foundation for the research. The research found out that, despite the many global, regional and national initiatives and legal and institutional frameworks in place to ensure that the female gender is not marginalised or left behind in the global energy transition aimed at attaining sustainable development for all regions and nations, the females still encounter a myriad of environmental injustice in many countries in the Global South. This constitutes a significant drawback to the globally well-recognised needed shift in energy consumption to renewable sources. The study therefore makes recommendations emphasising the need and strategies to proactively enhance the active participation of the Global South women in the energy transition agenda, and in accordance with the provisions of the relevant treaties and the gender equality provision in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental studies is a multidisciplinary field and the practical application involves a variety of stakeholders including scholars, governments, international organisations and activists collaborating to protect the ecosystem and ensure sustainable development. Environmental law is borne out of not just the need to control and manage environmental hazards but the need for the prevention of environmental pollution through regulation.¹ The role of law in the context of environmental challenges is to regulate societal behaviour and ensure that the society runs efficiently and ensure safe disposal of wastes and the by-products of industrial activities to prevent them from harming human lives and the environment.² Environmental law stresses the need for sustainable management, preservation, conservation and utilisation of natural resources.³

There is a relationship between gender and ecology.⁴ Females' limited rights to land ownership and limited access to energy, water and sanitation facilities in many parts of the Global South have continued to negatively affect their health, energy transition and sustainable development.⁵ The need for a policy, legal and implementation framework that ensures gender balance and environmental justice for all as the energy transition gathers momentum cannot be over emphasised. As Judge C. G. Weeramantry of the International Court of Justice noted in *Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v Slovakia)*,⁶ the protection of the environment is sine qua non for the enjoyment of numerous human rights such as the right to health and the right to life. Nonetheless, experiences and practices such as limited access to land ownership, clean energy, water and sanitation facilities have shown that the rights and dignity of the female gender still need special attention so as to ensure a worthwhile energy transition in the Global South.⁷

This paper accordingly analyses gender, feminism and energy transition in the Global South. To ensure a logical and coherent presentation, the paper is divided

¹ Lawrence Atsegbua and others, *Environmental Law in Nigeria Theory and Practice* (Ambik Press 2010) 2.

² Damilola S. Olawuyi, *The Principles of Nigerian Environmental Law* (Revised Edn, ABUAD Press 2015) 1.

³ Oludayo G. Amokaye, *Environmental Law and Practice in Nigeria* (2nd Edn, MIJ Professional Publishers 2014) 7.

⁴ Geneva Environment Network, 'Gender and the Environment'(2024) <<https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/gender-and-the-environment/>> accessed 27 September 2024.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [1998] 37 ILM 162, 206.

⁷ Geneva Environment Network (n 4).

into sections, which include this introduction; conceptual clarification and theoretical foundation; gender discrimination as an obstacle to energy transition in the Global South; conclusion; and recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

For the sake of clarity, this section will clarify the key concepts and the environmental justice theory used in the paper. The key concepts include gender, feminism and ecofeminism, Global South, energy transition, and environmental justice.

2.1 Gender

Gender means the behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with being a male or female in any given context or society,⁸ though the socio-legal concepts of transgender and bisexuality are now impacting the traditional classification of gender into male and female.⁹ Gender norms impact various aspects of the societal systems and the experiences of women and men, their interrelationships, differences in access to resources, and how they respond to societal changes, interventions and policies.¹⁰ Gender balance means the recognition of equal opportunities for both males and females in all sectors and institutions.¹¹ Gender equality is now generally considered a human right. This research demonstrates that gender justice is necessary to achieve the much needed energy transition in the Global South. Both gender balance and gender equality aim at gender justice, which is the recognition of equal rights and access to justice for women, girls and persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions.¹² Gender justice is one of the goals of ecofeminism.

⁸ Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 'Gender' (2023) <www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gender> accessed 19 December 2023.

⁹ Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko, 'Sex and Gender in International Human Rights Law through the Prism of the "Women" Category in Recent Case Law' (2024) 24(2) Human Rights Law Review *ngae012* <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngae012> accessed 28 September 2024. Anna Lindqvist, Marie Gustafsson Sendén and Emma Aurora Renström, 'What is gender, anyway: a review of the options for operationalising gender' (2020) 12(4) *Psychology & Sexuality* 332 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2020.1729844> accessed 28 September 2024

¹⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Gender Issue(s)' (2023) <<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country>> accessed 29 December 2023.

¹¹ Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility, 'Gender balance' (2024) <https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_624> accessed 10 April 2024.

¹² The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 'Gender Justice and Human Rights' (2024) <www.humanrights.dk/gender> accessed 28 September 2024.

2.1.1 Feminism and Ecofeminism

Feminism has been defined as the movement for the recognition of the claims of women for the legal, political and social rights equal to those possessed by men.¹³ It is the social movement that believes that women are uniquely and systematically oppressed and, as a result, it advocates for legal, political and economic rights and equality between men and women.¹⁴ Feminism is similar to and appears to have spurred the modern advocacy for women rights.¹⁵

Feminism is classified into four waves of evolution.¹⁶ The first wave began in the Enlightenment, which spanned the 17th century to the 19th century and it gained ground in the 1850s. It sought voting rights and educational access for the female gender in response to the formal abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade earlier in the century and to the temperance movement, which was a Protestant pastoral agitation against the consumption of alcohol in America in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁷ The second wave of feminism was a radical revival of feminism, and it took place in the 1960s during the period of the civil rights movement and the movement in the United States against the Vietnam War (1955-1975). It challenged the objectification of women through pornography and led to reforms in abortion and equal pay legislation. The third wave of feminism was prompted by the post-modernism and post-structuralism of the 1990s, which recognised a plurality of experiences for women based on class, ethnicity, gender and location.¹⁸ The third wave emphasised inclusivity, women empowerment and freedom.¹⁹ While some scholars believe that the third wave is still on course, a school of thought believes that the fourth wave has kicked off. It is believed to be building on the third wave features like inclusivity, women empowerment and freedom, and is being aided by the information and communications technology (ICT).²⁰ The 21st century fourth wave is an amalgam of many movements that complement and yet clash with one another. For example, while feminism has often been an unwelcoming and hostile concept for trans women and others who

¹³ AS Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford University Press 1974) 320.

¹⁴ Kenton Bell (Ed.), 'Feminism' (2023) <www.sociologydictionary.org/feminism/> accessed 19 December 2023.

¹⁵ The Britannica Dictionary, 'Women's rights' (2023) <<https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/women%27s-rights>> accessed 19 December 2023.

¹⁶ Kenton Bell (Ed.) (n 14).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Emmaline Soken-Huberty, 'Types of Feminism: The Four Waves' (2023) <<https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/types-of-feminism-the-four-waves/>> accessed 19 December 2023.

²⁰ Ibid.

reject gender binary, many fourth-wave feminists are working to combat that exclusion.²¹

Ecofeminism is a key feminist ideology that links climate change and environmental degradation to masculine dominance or gender inequality.²² Ecofeminists hold the opinion that global prioritisation of masculine aggression is responsible for environmental problems.²³ Ecofeminism is the feminist movement that underscores the unfair environmental injustice being suffered by women, seeks an end to it and campaigns for enhanced participation of women in the global initiatives for environmental sustainability. Ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne, a French feminist. She postulated that there was a link between the exploitation of nature and the subjugation of women.²⁴ Among the prominent ecofeminists since then have been Vandana Shiva, the founder of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and Carolyn Merchant, the author of *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*.²⁵

There is certainly a connection between energy transition and ecofeminism because there is the “ecological” need for the alternative energy model to be life-sustaining and protective of our collective survival. There is a connection between energy transition and ecofeminism also because of the “feminist” need to dismantle the disproportionate impacts that the alternative energy model has been having on the lives of women particularly in the Global South.²⁶ Women still suffer from limited access to land ownership, energy, water and sanitation facilities in many parts of the Global South.²⁷ 25.7% of men and 49.7% of women are at the risk of experiencing energy poverty.²⁸ Ecofeminism is now a growing

²¹ Ibid.

²² MasterClass, ‘7 Types of Feminism: A Brief History of Feminism’ (2023) <<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/types-of-feminism>> accessed 19 December 2023.

²³ Sarah Regan, ‘What Is Ecofeminism? Understanding The Intersection Of Gender & The Environment’ (2020), <<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/ecofeminism-history-and-principles>> accessed 29 December 2023.

²⁴ Christophe Petit Tesson, ‘Françoise d’Eaubonne and the Imperfect Foundation of Ecofeminist Thought’ (2022) *Green European Journal* < <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/francoise-deaubonne-and-the-imperfect-foundation-of-ecofeminist-thought/>> accessed 25 December 2023.

²⁵ Sarah Regan (n 23).

²⁶ Lavinia Steinfort, ‘Ecofeminism: fueling the journey to energy democracy’ (2018) <<https://www.tni.org/en/article/ecofeminism-fueling-the-journey-to-energy-democracy>> accessed 28 September 2024.

²⁷ Geneva Environment Network (n 4).

²⁸ European Parliament, ‘Gender Aspects of Energy Poverty’ (2023) <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/744256/IPOL_BRI\(2023\)744256_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/744256/IPOL_BRI(2023)744256_EN.pdf)> accessed 28 September 2024.

international campaign.²⁹ In this regard, the theme of the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that held in March 2022 was “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.”³⁰

Ecofeminists assert that the global prioritisation of masculine aggression is responsible for environmental problems.³¹ Ecofeminism underscores the unfairness of environmental injustices being suffered by women, seeks an end to these and campaigns for the enhanced participation of women in the initiatives for environmental sustainability at the global and other levels. Particularly in the Global South, there have been strong ecofeminist movements for the protection of the environment in resource-rich communities.³² Ecofeminists posit that women are the ones involved in the unpaid and mostly invisible caring and household labour, but that they are disadvantaged because the supply of water, electricity and heating that are essential to carry out those functions is now increasingly in the hand of capitalists.³³ Ecofeminism denounces “the current capitalist, heteropatriarchal energy model” and demands the institutionalisation of a decarbonised “ecofeminist energy model”.³⁴ Gender justice, which is a goal of ecofeminism, is very much needed today in the Global South.

2.1.2 Global South

The Global South has been defined as the poorest and least industrialised countries, located mainly in the southern part of the globe.³⁵ Some of the recent foci of the discourse on the Global South have been such interconnected issues as

²⁹ Alejandra Lozano and Lorena Zenteno, ‘The energy transition is part of the feminist and a human rights agenda’ (2022) <<https://gnhre.org/?p=15140>> accessed 28 September 2024.

³⁰ Men Engage Africa, ‘CSW66: Male engagement to address harmful norms and promote gender equality’ (2022) < <https://menengageafrica.org/event/csw66-male-engagement-to-address-harmful-norms-and-promote-gender-equality/>> accessed 28 September 2024.

³¹ Sarah Regan (n 23).

³² Anupam Pandey, ‘Globalisation and ecofeminism in the South: keeping the “Third World” alive’ (2013) 9 *Journal of Global* <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2013.855647>> accessed 29 September 2024. Visit also: Ekhaton, E. and Obani, Padi, ‘Women and environmental justice issues in Nigeria: An evaluation’ in JJ Dawunni, (ed), *Intersectionality and Women’s Access to Justice in Africa* (Rowman and Littlefield 2022) <bradscholars.brad.ac.uk/handle/> accessed 29 September 2024.

³³ Lavinia Steinfort (n 26).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ HaperCollins Publishers, ‘Definition of global south’ (2023), *Collins English Dictionary*, <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/global-south#:~:text=singular%20noun,southern%20part%20of%20the%20world.>> accessed 25 December 2023.

climate change, environment, migration, democracy and diseases.³⁶ It is the economically disadvantaged States, which are located mostly in the Southern Hemisphere. Those States are the mostly underdeveloped, non-aligned “Third World countries” of the cold war era. Today, it also refers to the spaces and peoples negatively impacted by contemporary globalisation.³⁷ The Global South contrasts with the Global North, wherein are located the economic, political and technological superpowers like the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Russia, Japan and China mostly located in the Northern Hemisphere. On the other hand, the countries in the Global South are in South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America, and include emerging economies like India.³⁸ The term is thus geographic, economic, technological, ideological and political. The obvious economic and technological underdevelopment in the Global South has been an impediment to energy transition there, and women have been more affected.

2.1.3 Energy Transition

Energy transition is the now globally acknowledged need to shift from fossil-based energy production and consumption to renewable energy sources like wind, solar and lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries.³⁹ Energy transition has been consciously or unconsciously practised by man over various periods of civilisation. For example, fire was generated in the olden days from striking two dry stones together in such a way that the spark of fire from the collision were made to hit dry chaff. When the chaff caught fire, the fire was made to pass to firewood. People then advanced from that to the use of matches. Charcoal from fire was also an early source of energy. Domestic animals also provided muscle power, which served as a significant energy source for agriculture.⁴⁰ Over the last 200 years, petroleum, natural gas and coal, which are collectively called fossil fuels, became the major source of energy.⁴¹

³⁶ Stefania Panebianco, ‘Conceptualising the Mediterranean Global South: A research agenda on security, borders and human flows’ (2021) *De Europa* Vol. No. 1 (2021) <<https://ojs.unito.it/index.php/deeuropa/article/download/5514/5143/>> accessed 29 September 2024.

³⁷ Anne Garland Mahler, ‘What/Where is the Global South?’ (2023) < <https://global.southstudies.as.virginia.edu/what-is-global-south>> accessed 25 December 2023.

³⁸ Rogelio Miñana and Adam Zahn, ‘The Power of Partnerships: Drexel’s Global Model and International DEIB Values, in IGI Global’ (2023), *Improving Higher Education Models Through International Cooperative Analysis* <www.igi-global.com> accessed 25 December 2023.

³⁹ S&P Global, ‘What is Energy Transition?’(2020) < <https://www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/market-insights/what-is-energy-transition>> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁴⁰ Oludayo G. Amokaye (n 3) 734.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The goals of the ongoing energy transition are sustainable development and paradigm shift towards a low carbon or “green” economy. In a document titled *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways towards Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication* that it released in 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) described a green economy as an economy that is low-carbon, is resource-efficient and is socially inclusive, so as to achieve improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.⁴² Overall, the green economy seeks to drastically minimise or eradicate harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Today, petroleum, natural gas and coal provide about 86% of all commercial energy worldwide.⁴³ Transition into a green economy aims at achieving environmental conservation and sustainable development as tools for achieving economic growth while reducing environmental degradation. In Nigeria, Africa’s largest crude oil exporter and biggest economy, fossil fuels still account for 80% of energy use and hydro-electric dams supply about 20% of the commercial power.⁴⁴ Though almost all electricity supply in Costa Rica and Paraguay is from renewable sources, fossil fuels still account for two-thirds of the energy mix in Latin America in general.⁴⁵ According to 2022 reports of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Energy (ACE), over 43% of the total ASEAN energy demand relies on fossil fuels, which are primarily coal. They account for over 60% of the electricity mix.⁴⁶

2.1.4 Environmental Justice

Environmental justice, the theoretical foundation of this research, means the entitlement of every person to the same environmental protection, benefits, and

⁴² United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways towards Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication* (2011) <<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/towards-green-economy-pathways-sustainable-development-and-poverty-eradication-10>> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁴³ World Bank, ‘Achieving Sustainable Energy’ (2023) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/brief/reforms-for-a-brighter-future-time-to-decide>> accessed 29 September 2024.

⁴⁴ David O. Obada and others, ‘A review of renewable energy resources in Nigeria for climate change mitigation’ (2024) 9 *Case Studies in Chemical and Environmental Engineering* 1006669 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378356426_Review_of_renewable_energy_in_Nigeria_for_climate_change_mitigation>article>pii> 29 September 2024.

⁴⁵ International Energy Agency, ‘Latin America Energy Outlook 2023’ (2023) <<https://www.iea.org/reports/latin-america-energy-outlook-2023/executive-summary>> accessed 9 October 2024.

⁴⁶ Theresia B. Sumarno and others, ‘Challenges in increasing Women’s participation in the energy transition in ASEAN and G7 countries: A qualitative approach based on the three tenets of justice’ (2024) 191 *Energy Policy* 114163 <<https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/enepol/v191y2024ics0301421524001836.html>> accessed 3 October 2024.

environmental policy engagement in his or her community, irrespective of race, colour, national origin or social status.⁴⁷ The prevailing opinion today is that environmental rights are human rights⁴⁸ and that no one should be denied of environmental justice.⁴⁹ Environmental rights entail the right to a clean, healthy and safe environment.⁵⁰ In relation to environmental justice, the theory of recognition justice demands the acknowledgment and enforcement of the claims of individuals and communities for participation in decision-making on environmental issues that are affecting them.⁵¹

The right to environment is recognised in various international and regional legal instruments and declarations. The Hague Declaration of 1989 recognises “the right to live in a viable global environment”.⁵² In 1994, the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities emphasised a relationship between human rights and the environment. It noted that the Constitutions of 66 States contained specific provisions on the protection of the environment and made it an obligation of States to protect the human right to a satisfactory environment. Principle 1 of Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment 1972 provides that man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. Principle 13 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992 provides that States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. Principle 23 provides that the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected. The African Charter on Human Peoples’ Rights 1981 provides that all peoples shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favourable to their development.⁵³

⁴⁷ NRDC, ‘The Environmental Justice Movement’ (2023) <www.nrdc.org> accessed 8 April 2024. Ekhaton, E. and Obani, Pedi, ‘Women and Environmental justice issues in Nigeria: An evaluation’ in JJ Dawunni (Ed), *Intersectionality and Women’s Access to Justice in Africa* (Rowman and Littlefield 2022) <bradscholars.brad.ac.uk/handle/> accessed 29 September 2024.

⁴⁸ Damilola S. Olawuyi (n 2) 229-230.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lawrence Atsegbua (n 1) 176.

⁵¹ Emily Eisenhauer and others, ‘New Directions in Environmental Justice Research at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Incorporating Recognitional and Capabilities Justice Through Health Impact Assessments’ (2021) <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35237378/>> accessed 9 April 2024.

⁵² Declaration of Hague, March 11, 1989.

⁵³ African Charter on Human Peoples’ Rights 1981, article 24.

Environmental justice has also been affirmed by regional courts in different cases in the Global South. In *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v Kenya*,⁵⁴ the Ogiek community in Kenya was evicted from their ancestral land. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights held that they had the right to establish and maintain places for assembling in connection with their religion.⁵⁵ In *Social and Economic Rights Action Centre & Anor v Nigeria*,⁵⁶ the complainant averred that the respondent had condoned or facilitated wanton environmental degradation and health hazards resulting from crude oil exploitation by Shell oil consortium in Ogoni land, Niger Delta, Nigeria. The complainant contended that the foregoing was contrary to the international environmental standards, safety measures and environmental safety studies requirements and were violations of articles 2, 4, 14, 16, 18 (1), 21 and 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights found that the respondent had violated the said articles of the African Charter and appealed to it to take measures to protect the environment, health and livelihood of the people of Ogoni land.

The Global South is lagging behind the Global North in the utilisation of renewable energy vis-à-vis environmental rights. The trend has significant implications for populations experiencing energy poverty and other forms of vulnerability or discrimination affecting their access to energy.

3. GENDER DISCRIMINATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Notwithstanding that there have been different global,⁵⁷ regional⁵⁸ and national initiatives to foster a sustainable energy transition in recent decades, the reality is

⁵⁴ Application No. 006/2012; judgment delivered on May 26, 2017.

⁵⁵ At page 163.

⁵⁶ [2001] ACHPR Comm. No. 155/96.

⁵⁷ It is not a far-fetched fact that municipal law and international law have had provisions against gender discrimination since the end of the Second World War (1939-1945). In this regard, non-discrimination against women or equality between men and women is enshrined in such important international human rights instruments as the United Nations Charter (UN) 1945, Preamble and articles 1, 8 and 55; Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Preamble and articles 2, 17 and 25 (1); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Articles 3, 14 and 26; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Articles 2 and 3; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Preamble and articles 1, 2, 24 and 29; European Convention on Human Rights 1950 Articles 8 and 14; The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993. Two prominent UN institutions with similar aims and objectives

that gender discrimination persists to the extent that it remains a significant obstacle to energy transition.⁵⁹ Despite the principle of cooperation inherent in international environmental law, the Global North/South dichotomy is real and has been a challenge to energy transition due to the widely different levels of economic and technological development existing in the two global divides. The Global North countries are mainly responsible for the mineral resources exploitation causing environmental degradation in the South, where those at the receiving end are majorly women as made clearer later in this paper.⁶⁰ The Global North countries have the funds, technology, diversified economy and literacy rate with which to minimise or combat the effect of environmental hazards arising from their exploitation of natural resources and other economic activities in their own countries.⁶¹ The economies of the countries in the Global North do not depend solely or largely on mineral exploitation because a lot of their revenue derives from other sources like financial services, tourism, information and communication technology (ICT) and manufacturing.⁶² Recycling, which is an efficient and effective preventive solution to environmental pollution, has also reached an advanced stage in the developed countries in the Global North.⁶³ Conversely, most of the countries in the Global South still largely depend on revenue accruing from mineral resources exploitation, which inevitably generates environmental hazards.

are the UN Commission on the Status of Women established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 11 (II) of June 21, 1946 and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) created by the UN General Assembly in 2010. Gender equality is the 5th of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030.

⁵⁸ European Convention on Human Rights 1950, Articles 8 and 14; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Articles 18 (3), 3 (1), 13 (2) and (3), and 22 (1); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003 (Maputo Protocol).

⁵⁹ Anupam Pandey (n 32).

⁶⁰ Sofia Irfan, 'The Global North's Environmental Impact on the Global South' (2021) <<https://www.ban.org/news-new/2021/4/20/the-global-norths-environmental-impact-on-the-global-south>> 29 September 2024.

⁶¹ Jason Hickel and others, 'Imperialist appropriation in the world economy: Drain from the global South through unequal exchange 1990-2015' (2022) 73 *Global Environmental Change*, 102467 <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S09593780200005X>> accessed 25 December 2023.

⁶² Jia Wang and Guixian Tian, 'Driver or a Barrier to the Economy: Natural Resources a blessing or a curse for Developed Economies?' (2023) 87 *Resources Policy* 104331 <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301420723010425>> accessed 30 September 2024.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The Global North/South dichotomy brings to the fore the common but differentiated responsibility principle (CBDRP).⁶⁴ The CBDRP is a variation of the principle of cooperation. On the other hand, the larger percentage of global environmental hazards or pollutants come from the mining and industrial activities of the Global North countries and their corporations operating overseas.⁶⁵ The Global South countries still lack the funds, technology, economic diversity and technical capacity for climate change mitigation and adaptation and, from their perspectives, the benefit of the exploitation of such resources polluting their environment outweighs the environmental cost. So, most developing countries in the Global South are more concerned in the revenue from their natural resources than the effect of their exploitation on their environment, and that seems to be understandable because of their low level of development and high poverty level.⁶⁶ So, those countries are not very eager to put in place or implement energy transition treaties, legislation and regulations that could jeopardise their much needed revenue generation. In Nigeria, for example, the trend has been responsible for the environmental degradation from the extractives sector and the shifting of the deadlines for gas flaring.⁶⁷ Women have been affected more in the local communities. This is because a large number of people in many cultural groups in the Global South still prioritise boys' education while paying lip service to girls' education, because of their belief that girls would sooner or later get married and go to another man's home. As a result, women and girls are less economically empowered as they are confined to unsustainable practices like the use of firewood and they experience various impediments to their energy transition in the South.⁶⁸

There remains the need to strike a balance between the reduction of poverty and protection of the environment in the Global South, more so as both are prominent among the goals of international environmental law. Debt servicing, declining economic fortunes and reduced development assistance have worsened poverty

⁶⁴ Rio Declaration 1992, Principle 7.

⁶⁵ Damilola S. Olawuyi (n 2) 261.

⁶⁶ Jason Hickel and others (n 61).

⁶⁷ See generally Associated Gas Re-injection Act 1979, Chapter A25, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, and Petroleum Industry Act 2021.

⁶⁸ SDG Action, 'The Lack Of Gender Targets For Clean Energy Is Harming Women And Girls' (2023) < <https://sdg-action.org/the-lack-of-gender-targets-for-clean-energy -is-harming-women-and-girls/>> accessed 7 October 2024. Visit also: Ryan J. Stock and Trevor Birkenholtz, 'Photons Vs. Firewood: Female (Dis)Empowerment By Solar Power In India' (2020) 27 (4) Gender, Place and Culture 1-24 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344703402_Photos_vs_firewood_female_disempowerment_by_solar_power_in_india> accessed 19 July 2024.

and energy transition possibilities in developing countries.⁶⁹ It was in recognition of this that the leaders of the world's leading industrial democracies agreed at their "Green Summit" in July 1989 to double their efforts to assist developing countries so that they could preserve their resources and avoid the deterioration of their ecological systems.⁷⁰

Over 30 years after the bold decision in 1989 by the rich countries to upscale their assistance to the poor ones, per capital income in developing countries has generally been falling.⁷¹ While there are ongoing initiatives to involve indigenous and local peoples in environmental management and protection,⁷² reducing poverty and protecting the environment largely remain antithetical in many countries around the world, because, as with anything that diverts even incremental energies or resources of subsistence-level people, a pause to protect or repair the environment or implement energy transition can practically take away the lean means of livelihood from poor countries and hungry families. In many rural communities, a large number of poor people inevitably degrade the environment so as to eat.⁷³ Thus, there has been minimal improvement between now and 1980 when the then President of the World Bank, Barber Conable, stated that the "stubborn fact of the eighties is that growth has been inadequate, poverty is still on the rise, and the environment is poorly protected" as he maintained that, unless changed, "these realities would deny our children a peaceful, decent, and liveable world."⁷⁴

As regards the energy transition agenda, the hardest hit have been women, particularly in the Global South rural communities, where there are die-hard unfavourable traditions and cultural practices.⁷⁵ A 2021 OECD study report

⁶⁹ International Monetary Fund, 'Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction: The Role of the Enhanced HIPC Initiative' (2001) <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/debt/eng/>> accessed 30 September 2024.

⁷⁰ H. Jefferey Leonard, 'Environment and the Poor: Development Strategies for a Common Agenda' (1994) Environmental Policy and Regulation (The International Institute in collaboration with Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., United States, May 23-June 3, 1994) 2.

⁷¹ United Nations Development Programme, 'Human Development Report 2023/2024' (2024) <<https://hdr.undp.org/documents>> accessed 30 September 2024.

⁷² Burgos-Ayala, A., Jiménez-Aceituno, A., Torres-Torres, A. M., Rozas-Vásquez, D., & Lam, D. P. M. 'Indigenous and local knowledge in environmental management for human-nature connectedness: a leverage points perspective' (2020) 16(1) *Ecosystems and People* 290–303. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2020.1817152>> accessed 30 September 2024.

⁷³ United Nations Development Programme (n 71) 29, 120.

⁷⁴ Barber Conable, Address to the Board of Governors (The World Bank 1980).

⁷⁵ OECD, 'Gender and the Environment' (2021) <www.oecd.org/OECD/Publications> accessed 27 December 2023.

highlighted the gender/environment nexus based on data, case studies and other evidence. It analysed the nine environment-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are goals 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.⁷⁶ The report unveiled the evidence gaps, economic and wellbeing benefits and government and justice aspects. It also showcased how women are disproportionately affected by climate change, deforestation, land degradation, desertification, water scarcity and inadequate sanitation and the aggravation of gender inequalities by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁷

The customs and traditions in many communities in the Global South still prevent many women from owing or leasing land to secure loans. Women, activist lawyers, feminists and governments are still battling to dismantle the customs and traditions that prevent a female from inheriting from the properties of her father or husband. This traditional practice prevents those females from sharing in the farmlands and houses of their deceased fathers. This invariably denies them of economic empowerments and collateral security for loans, so that they sometimes have to resort to unsustainable practices like the use of firewood. The practice still survives in Third World countries like Nepal,⁷⁸ Tanzania⁷⁹ and Nigeria⁸⁰ despite the official efforts to eradicate it. In Muslim countries under sharia, wives and daughters are allowed to inherit only half of what a male counterpart would inherit.⁸¹ A 2020 study found out that nearly 40% of countries had property inheritance practices discriminating against females. In 36 of the 189 countries surveyed, widows were not entitled to the same inheritance rights as widowers, and 39 countries prevented female children from inheriting the same proportion of assets as male children.⁸² The UN has also found out that one in every 10 widows worldwide lives in extreme poverty resulting partly from climate-related disasters.⁸³ In *Akinnubi & Anor v Akinnubi & 2 Ors*,⁸⁴ a widow married under

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ International Organisation for Migration, 'Barriers to Women's Land and Property Access and Ownership in Nepal' (2016) <www.publications.iom.int/pdf/barriers_to_womens_land_and_property_access_and_ownership_in-Nepal> accessed 1 October 2024.

⁷⁹ International Centre for Research on Women, 'Disowned: women's struggle to own and inherit land in Tanzania' (2014) <www.icrw.org/Blog> accessed 1 October 2024.

⁸⁰ Reginald Akujobi Onuoha, 'Discriminatory Property Inheritance Under Customary Law in Nigeria' (2008) *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* <www.icnl.org/IJNL> accessed 1 October 2024.

⁸¹ Roya Rahmani, 'Ensuring Women Have Equal Rights to Inheritance And Property Is Key To Tackling Climate Change' (2022) <www.equalitynow.org/news_and_insights> accessed 1 October 2024.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ [1997] 2 NWLR (Pt. 486) 144.

Yoruba customary law filed an action seeking to allow her to participate in the administration of her deceased husband's intestate property. The Supreme Court of Nigeria held that the Yoruba customary law does not permit a widow to inherit her deceased husband's property or be appointed as an administratrix of it. It held further that she was even an object of inheritance. In *Mojekwu v Mojekwu*,⁸⁵ it was however held that any rule of the Nigerian customary law that discriminates against a woman by disallowing her from inheriting from the estate of her father was unconstitutional and void.

Where females are deprived their right to real and personal properties, this drives them into deeper poverty and limited opportunities for keying into the energy transition.⁸⁶ As a result of poverty, many women cannot afford to educate themselves or their children and have no option than to prowl on their environment as they scramble for things like firewood⁸⁷ and resort to unconventional fishing methods, thereby disrupting the ecology. For example, a study in 2005 discovered a link between poverty and the fisheries in Lake Victoria in Uganda.⁸⁸ A study relating to gender and the environment also found out that more than half of rural households and about a quarter of urban households in sub-Saharan Africa lack easy access to sources of drinking water while most of the burden of collecting it falls on women.⁸⁹ It also found out that majority of the households in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern and South-East Asia rely on solid fuels for cooking on open fires or traditional stoves with no chimney or hood, and that this disproportionately affects the health of women.⁹⁰

Women also suffer untold hardship due to environmental problems like water pollution and deforestation.⁹¹ Women appear to be the hardest hit in the population. Studies have found out that the numbers of poor households headed by women have expanded rapidly in rural Africa and in urban slums in Latin America.⁹² Those households generally have fewer working members, more dependents, less access to productive resources, more family and low-productivity

⁸⁵ [2001] 1 CHR 179.

⁸⁶ *Roya Rahmani* (n 81).

⁸⁷ OECD (n 75).

⁸⁸ Konstantine Odongkara, 'Poverty in the Fisheries: Indicators, Causes and Interventions' (2005) <www.aquadocs.org/mapping> accessed 26 December 2023.

⁸⁹ United Nations, 'Environment-UN Statistics Division' (2023) <www.unstats.un.org/documents-environment.pdf> accessed 26 December 2023.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Eleni Mourdoukoutas, 'Women grapple with harsh weather' <www.un.org/august-2016/women-grapple-with-harsh-weather> accessed 1 October 2024.

⁹² UN Habitat, 'Harsh Realities: Marginalised Women in Cities of the Developing World' (2012) <www.unhabitat.org/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world> accessed 1 October 2024.

employment.⁹³ In 2018, over 50% of employed people outside the agricultural sector work in the informal sector in Latin America. The rate was near 80% in lower-middle-income countries like Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In 2021, 53.7% of employed Latin American women worked in low productivity and very high informality sectors.⁹⁴ According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), wages for female employees in the energy sector are 20% lower than for their male counterparts, even when differences in skill levels are reckoned with. It also found that, on average, there are 76% fewer women than men working in the energy sector. According to 2018 data from 29 IEA member countries, that compares with the average 8% gap for the total workforce.⁹⁵ As a result of such trend, the Dominican Republic's Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources admitted at the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022 that "not everything that is green is just." In other words, there is still the need to ensure eschew occupational segregation and foster a gender justice in the energy transition agenda.⁹⁶ Poverty inevitably puts the environment under stress. As envisaged by principle 5 of the Rio Declaration 1992, eradication of poverty is a necessity for the attainment of sustainable development.

The evidence also suggests that women are more affected by such environmental hazards as extreme cold, heat waves, flood, drought and wildfires that are linked to climate change.⁹⁷ They are also more exposed to the effects of the refugee crises often thrown up by environmental hazards like floods.⁹⁸ The World Health Organisation (WHO) has noted that floods, drought and storm kill more women than men.⁹⁹ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) acknowledges that low-lying and other small island countries, countries with low-lying coastal, arid and semi-arid areas or areas liable to floods, drought and desertification, and developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems are mostly prone to adverse effects of climate change.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ International Labour Organisation and European Commission, 'Green Jobs, an Opportunity for Women in Latin America' (2023) 12 and 13 <www.ilo.org/wcms_888590.pdf> accessed October 6, 2024.

⁹⁵ SDG Action (n 68).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ International Labour Organisation and European Commission (n 94).

⁹⁸ Helen Lynn and others, 'Plastics, Gender and the Environment' (2017) <www.wecf.org/2018/11/Plasticsgenderandtheenvironment> accessed 27 December 2023.

⁹⁹ Population Reference Bureau, 'Women More Vulnerable Than Men to Climate Change' (2023) <www.prb.org/resources/women-more-vulnerable-than-men-to-climate-change> accessed 27 December 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Recital, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992.

For cultural and religious reasons, many men still in the Global South prevent or restrict their wives engaging in formal employment.¹⁰¹ As a result, many women are consigned to take up menial jobs or engage in agriculture or other activities in the informal sector that further expose them to climate change shocks. As a result of their lack of education, many women also lack the knowledge that could assist them to contribute their own quota to the energy transition.¹⁰²

A study on gender and the environment has found out that fewer women than men participate in high-level decision-making relating to the environment,¹⁰³ thereby getting left behind in the energy transition. Women are often not allowed to make their own contribution to sustainable development because they are overburdened with bearing and rearing of children.¹⁰⁴ Many women are still not educated or lack job security.¹⁰⁵ According to the estimate of a study carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the energy transition will create 22.5 million jobs in Latin America by 2030 if there are appropriate policies. The predicted zero-emission future will decarbonise agriculture, forestry, construction and the manufacturing sector.¹⁰⁶ ILO however found out in 2022 that, if the ongoing patterns of occupational segregation persisted, women would have less access to the new jobs being created by the decarbonisation programmes. This is because 72% of employed Latin American women are concentrated in services sector, which has 41.1% of them and in commerce, which accounts for 29.9% of them. While men are more evenly distributed in the various sectors of the economy, women are almost absent in such sectors as electricity, gas, water, construction and transportation.¹⁰⁷

According to a survey carried out by the UN, downsizing in the public sector has also led to disproportionate effect on formal employment opportunities for women and this will likely throw more women into less formal, non-regular jobs that impact negatively on the environment.¹⁰⁸ Today, women are just 30% of all scientific researchers, many of who carry out studies on environmental

¹⁰¹ UNESCO, 'Engaging men for gender equality in the Global South: perspectives from the UNESCO Maputo Dialogue' 2024 <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:>> accessed 3 October 2024.

¹⁰² Theresia B. Sumarno and others (n 89).

¹⁰³ United Nations (n 89).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ International Labour Organisation and European Commission (n 94).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, 'World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014 Gender Equality and Sustainable Development' (2014) 42 <1900unwomen_sustainable-development> accessed 3 October 2024.

degradation, climate change and energy transition. Women are also not adequately represented in many municipal bodies that take decisions on environmental issues.¹⁰⁹ While some countries have succeeded in closing the gender gap,¹¹⁰ it is clear from the foregoing that the now globally acknowledged energy transition cannot be holistically achieved as long as gender equality remains elusive in the Global South. The foregoing deprivations, discrimination and marginalisation that females continue to experience while the world campaigns for energy transition underscore the importance of ecofeminism.

Such discrimination against women and the attendant obstacles to energy transition are however unlawful and unjustifiable. This is because women's role in environmental protection and right to environmental justice is an inherent provision of the international environmental law¹¹¹ and the international human rights law. Though, under article 2 (1) of the United Nations Charter 1945 and principle 2 of the Rio Declaration 1992, every State has the sovereign power to exploit their resources as they deem fit, they are also expected to abide by the principle of cooperation under international environmental law and protect women's right to environmental justice. The principle of cooperation in international environmental law is provided in principles 7, 12, 14 and 27 of the Rio Declaration 1992. They provide that States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem.

Indeed, the international human rights law, to which the countries in the Global South have subscribed,¹¹² prohibits discrimination against women with regards to the environment and any other matter. Prominent among such international human rights instruments protecting the environmental rights of women in one way or the other are the Rio Declaration 1992, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979,¹¹³ United Nations Charter (UN) 1945,¹¹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948,¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ According to the WEF, "The 2024 Global Gender Gap Index shows that while no country has achieved full gender parity, 97% of the economies included in this edition have closed more than 60% of their gap, compared to 85% in 2006."

¹¹¹ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 20.

¹¹² E.g. United Nations, 'United Nations Treaty Collection' (2024) <<https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails-charter-of-the-united-nations-UNTC>> accessed 3 October 2024; Dag Hammarskjöld, 'UN Human Rights Documentation' (2024) <<https://research.un.org/docs/udhr>> accessed 3 October 2024; United Nations, 'United Nations Treaty Collection' (2024) <<https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails-international-covenant-on-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>> accessed 3 October 2024.

¹¹³ See articles 3-5, 11, 14 and 15, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women 1979.

¹¹⁴ Charter of the United Nations 1945, preamble and articles 1, 8 and 55.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966,¹¹⁶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966,¹¹⁷ Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993,¹¹⁸ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981¹¹⁹ and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003.¹²⁰ Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration 1992 provides that women have a vital role to play in environmental management and development and that their full participation is essential to achieve sustainable development.

As its name suggests, CEDAW aims at eliminating discrimination against women and providing equal opportunities for all irrespective of their gender, colour and sex. Article 1 thereof defines "discrimination against women" as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." Articles 2 and 4 provide for the eradication or modification of social and cultural practices based on stereotyped role for women and eradicate violence against women. Article 3 provides that "States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men." Article 5 makes it the responsibility of State parties to eliminate prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Articles 13, 14 and 15 provide that State parties shall eliminate discrimination against women in the areas of economic and social life.

Article 2 (1) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003 (Maputo Protocol) provides that member States shall combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures. Article 18 of it provides for the right to a healthy and sustainable environment. Article 19 provides for the right to sustainable development while article 21 provides for the right to

¹¹⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, preamble and articles 2, 17 and 25 (1).

¹¹⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, articles 3, 14 and 26.

¹¹⁷ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, articles 2 and 3.

¹¹⁸ Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993, article 18.

¹¹⁹ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, article 18 (3).

¹²⁰ Otherwise known as the Maputo Protocol.

inheritance. Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol provides that State parties shall take legislative and other measures to eliminate practices that are harmful to women. It has to be noted that gender equality is the 5th of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have global application.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined gender, feminism, and energy transition in the Global South, which means the poorest, least industrialised and economically disadvantaged countries, located mainly in the Southern Hemisphere. It analysed the relationship between gender, feminism and energy transition, vis-à-vis different types of environmental injustice still being experienced by females in the Global South. The paper defined the relevant terms, adopted environmental justice theory as its basis and traced the history of feminism, which is the social movement that believes that women are uniquely and systematically oppressed and, as a result, advocates legal, political and economic rights and equality between men and women. Ecofeminists link climate change to masculine dominance or gender inequality and hold the opinion that global prioritisation of masculine aggression is responsible for environmental problems. The paper expatiated on this phenomenon and shows how it hampers the current energy transition agenda.

International environmental law and international human rights law have ample provisions for gender equality and the protection of the environmental rights of women. Prominent among the international mechanisms for such a protection are the Rio Declaration 1992, Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003 (Maputo Protocol), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, UN Commission on the Status of Women established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 11 (II) of June 21, 1946 and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) created by the UN General Assembly in 2010.

Despite such mechanisms for environmental justice and gender equality, millions of women unfortunately continue to bear the brunt of ecological hazards and environmental injustice in the countries in the Global South. Poverty has been worsened by debt servicing, declining economic fortunes and reduced development assistance. Women are also the most affected by environmental hazards like water pollution, plastic pollution, cold, heat flood, drought, fire and deforestation, particularly in countries in the Pacific Islands and the coastal areas

of Asia. African rural communities and Latin American urban slums have witnessed rapidly expanded poor households headed by women.¹²¹

Native law and customs in several countries in the Global South still prevent many women from owing or leasing land that they might need to secure loans. While such customs have been nullified in few cases that got to court, women are still deprived and denied with impunity in most of such cases of discrimination that do not get to court. In such cases where women are deprived or denied their right to property ownership, they are compelled to fall back on their environment in unsustainable modes like felling of trees for firewood and crude fishing methods, which negate resource conservation and the energy transition agenda. So, lack of balance of environmental justice between both genders continues to foster poverty and environmental hazards in the countries in the Global South. In other words, the economic empowerment needed by some women to contribute to energy transition is limited by the customs and traditions of many countries in the Global South. Poverty inevitably puts the environment under stress because the rural poor usually have no option than to prowl on their environment for subsistence farming. All the foregoing harsh realities about women in the Global South remain serious obstacles to the attainment of energy transition.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The central section of this paper has highlighted the numerous types and cases of environmental injustice that women are still directly or indirectly subjected to, in the Global South. The trend continues to militate against universal progress with the energy transition. In response, ecofeminism seeks to eradicate unfair exploitation by man of nature and repression of the potentials of women in the management of the environment. Ecofeminism is commendably a protest against the marginalisation of women in the initiatives for environmental sustainability and energy transition. If women are no longer denied education as has been the case in many countries in the Global South, they can be intellectually equipped to effectively engage in the governance of the environment and employment and leadership in the energy sector. This can be achieved through the enhancement and effectiveness of the universal education programmes being supported by UNESCO across countries.¹²² If women are given access to environmental resources like land, this would empower them to invest in agriculture and be able to furnish a collateral for loans for agro-allied businesses and small and medium-

¹²¹ UN Habitat (n 92).

¹²² UNESCO, '2023 SDG 4 scorecard report on progress towards national SDG 4 benchmarks' (2024) <<https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2023sdg4scorecard>> accessed 3 October 2024.

scale enterprises.¹²³ If they are included in the management of farms, a more diverse and informed pool will be available to enhance productivity that could hasten energy transition.¹²⁴

Ideally, no gender should be made to bear the effects of environmental hazards.¹²⁵ Women have an important role to play in safeguarding the environment. In many communities around the world, women manage water, food and forests.¹²⁶ They have historically championed conservation campaigns in different countries in the Global South.¹²⁷ In 1973, women in Reni, northern India, prevented environmentally hazardous tree felling.¹²⁸ They literally hugged the trees in protest to prevent them being cut down by loggers. The forest conservation protest came to be known as the Chipko movement.¹²⁹ In the 1970s, there was the Women in Development (WID), which later transformed into Women, Environment and Development (WED). Its ecofeminist ideology views women with a biological connection to nature that enables them to have a deeper stewardship of it. Today, the Green Belt Movement in Kenya empowers grassroots women through tree planting. Women continue to play significant roles in environmental protection and the energy transition, which should be supported through gender equality initiatives.

Women education should also be encouraged and enhanced because education has a vital role to play in environmental protection, population management and energy transition. Educated women invariably have better access to climate information services (CIS).¹³⁰ Studies have shown that it is only when women become partners in the development process that resource management will considerably improve in rural areas.¹³¹ Gender responsiveness in land, water,

¹²³ World Bank, 'Access to Finance for Women in Agricultural Development Households' (2015) <publications.worldbank.org/Session-4-Access-for-Women-in-Agricultural-Development-Households> accessed 3 October 2024.

¹²⁴ Dena German Energy Agency 'Inclusive Energy Transition: More Women for more Energy Innovation' (2021) <www.startup-energy-transition.com> accessed 3 October 2024.

¹²⁵ OECD (n 75).

¹²⁶ Ujjal Das, 'Role of women in environmental protection' (2022) *International Journal of Political Science* <<https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2022.v4.i2b.183>> accessed 6 October 2024.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Rengalakshmi Raj and others, 'Improving women's access to climate information services and enhancing their capability to manage climate risks' (2020) 10 (1) *APN Science Bulletin* <www.researchgate.net/Improving_womens_access_to_climate_information_se.pdf> accessed 6 October 2024.

¹³¹ Ibid.

energy and transport management would foster a sustainable and inclusive economic development and increase wellbeing for all, more so as there is an inextricably interwoven relationship between gender equality, the environment and energy transition.¹³²

International organisations, governments and civil society organisations in the Global South need to consciously work to eliminate all cultural practices or official policies perpetrating or condoning environmental injustice against women, because they are unfair, unlawful and are a violation of international environmental law and of the relevant human rights instruments. There is the need for commitment at the national, regional and global levels to faithfully implement such international initiatives so that women will not be left behind in the current global campaign for energy transition. International environmental policy-makers and organisations should synergise with the defaulting countries in the Global South so that they will begin to meaningfully carry women along in the campaign for energy transition. Like their male counterparts, women are entitled to environmental justice under the relevant global and regional legal and institutional environmental frameworks earlier highlighted. The need for an integrated policy framework that factors in inclusive growth and the energy transition agenda must be deliberately and conscientiously pursued at local, national, regional and global levels. In a nutshell, governments at all levels should put in place laws, policies and programmes that would enhance the participation of women in the energy transition agenda.

¹³² Ibid.